

Remarks

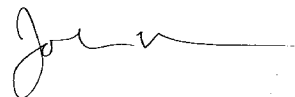
Claims 1-2, 5-8, 11-18, and 21-23 are pending in this application. Reconsideration and allowance in view of the above amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 4, 5, 10, 11, 20, and 21 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Accordingly, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of dependent claims 3 and 4, independent claim 7 has been amended to include the features of dependent claims 9 and 10, and independent claim 17 has been amended to include the features of dependent claims 19 and 20. Further, dependent claims 5, 11, and 21 have been rewritten into dependent form.

Claims 1-3, 6-9, 12-19, and 22-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) over Ballam (US Patent No.: 6,959,271). This rejection is moot in view of the incorporation of allowable subject matter into independent claims 1, 7, and 17.

In light of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner require anything further to place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



John A. Merecki
Reg. No.: 35,812

Date: December 5, 2006

Hoffman, Warnick & D'Alessandro LLC
75 State Street, 14th Floor
Albany, New York 12207
(518) 449-0044; (518) 449-0047 (fax)